TO: Administrators
FROM: Medical Facilities Engineers
DATE: October 22, 2014

Holiday decorations in health care facilities

As the holiday season approaches; we receive a number of inquiries regarding the use of decorations. The Life Safety Code (Section 19.7.5.4) prohibits the use of combustible decorations. Untreated Christmas trees are considered to be a highly flammable decoration. The South Dakota Department of Health, Office of Health Facilities Licensure and Certification, will allow the use of live trees in health care facilities with the following precautions:

- Live trees must be flocked with a fire retardant.
- A staff person must be designated to water the tree.
- Live trees should be limited to one per building.
- Live trees may be in the building only between the dates of **December 8, 2014 and January 2, 2015**.
- The tree must be located in a room that can be closed off from corridors, e.g. a dining room or lounge, and closely supervised by staff.
- The tree should be located near sprinkler heads or smoke detectors, if possible.
- Lights on trees should be unplugged at night. All lights used on trees must be UL listed. UL 588.
- The use of small trees with fiber optic lights is acceptable, but check for a UL listing mark on the device.
- Lights may be installed on the exterior of the building and on outside trees and shrubs. Exterior lighting circuits must have ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protection.
- Wrapping paper and plastic film is very combustible and must not be used to decorate doors.
- The use of untreated live greens, including wreaths made from live greens, for decoration inside the building is prohibited.

We wish you a safe holiday season. Should you have any questions regarding the above information, please contact the Office of Health Care Facilities Licensure and Certification at (605) 773-3356 or email todd.mccaskell@state.sd.us.